

## Message Text

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ACTION IO-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, UNDP

SUBJECT: CERP 0008 - EVALUATION OF UN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS -  
BANGLADESH

REF: STATE 64907

SUMMARY: UNDP/DACCA RESREP OCCUPIES CENTRAL ROLE IN  
LOCAL UNDP ACTIVITIES. INCREASED EFFECTIVENESS HAMPERED  
BY MANPOWER LIMITATIONS AND NEED FOR IN-DEPTH COUNTRY  
PROGRAMMING PROCEDURES. AS MEANS TO ASSUME MORE  
ACTIVE ROLE IN TA COORDINATION UNDP PREPARING COMPREHENSIVE  
REPORT ON EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES. IMPLEMENTATION OF  
UNDP PROJECTS SLOWED BY PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT PROBLEMS.

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UNDP NOW REGULARLY CONSULTING WITH BILATERAL DONORS BUT

INFORMATION FLOW STILL NEEDS IMPROVEMENT. RESREP DISPLAYING CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL INITIATIVE IN DEALING WITH NUMBER OF URGENT HOST COUNTRY PROBLEMS. CURRENT IPF LEVEL DOLS 18.5 MILLION, OF WHICH PROJECTS TOTALING DOLS 14,449,000 APPROVED. TOTAL UN FAMILY EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL OY BOARD IS 101, OF WHICH 5 ARE UNDP PROGRAM OFFICERS AND 40 UNDP TECHNICAL PERSONNEL. MORE THAN 100 PROJECTS PLANNED/UNDERWAY. END SUMMARY.

1. ROLE OF UNDP IN UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM. UNDP RESREP IS THE EFFECTIVE LEADER OF ALL UNDP ACTIVITIES IN BANGLADESH. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF UNICEF AND TO A LESSER EXTENT WHO, RESREP OCCUPIES THE CHIEF COORDINATING ROLE FOR ALL OTHER UN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. RESREP HOLDS SEVERAL MEETINGS MONTHLY WITH UNDP STAFF AND HEADS OF UN SPECIALIZED AGENCIES. MEETINGS OFTEN FOCUS HEAVILY ON OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN ADDITION TO PROGRAMMATIC CONCERNS. UNDP STAFF IS UNDERMANNED WITH 5 PROGRAM OFFICERS (3 EXPATRIATE, 2 BENGALIEE) RESPONSIBLE FOR OVER 100 PLANNED/ONGOING PROJECTS SPANNING NUMEROUS SECTORS. ASSISTANT RESREP-CUM-CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER SLOT HAS BEEN VACANT SINCE MID-DECEMBER 1974. UNDP/DACCA STILL NOT SURE WHEN REPLACEMENT WILL ARRIVE. RESREP AND HIS STAFF OVERWHELMINGLY CONCERNED WITH DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS, LACKING MANPOWER TO FOCUS ON BASIC CONCEPTS OF UNDP/SPECIALIZED AGENCY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING. MANPOWER NOT NECESSARILY CONTROLLING FACTOR, HOWEVER, AS MERE INCREASE IN STAFF COULD RESULT IN COMMENSURATE INCREASE IN NUMBER OF PROJECTS WITH SAME OFFICER/PROJECT RATIO. UNDP FACED WITH DIFFICULT CHOICE BETWEEN DISTRIBUTING RESOURCES ACROSS WIDE RANGE SECTORS/SUBSECTORS OR CONCENTRATING EFFORTS ON PRIORITY AREAS WITH FEWER BUT LARGER PROJECTS. AT PRESENT, UNDP/BDG RELATIONSHIP IS SUCH THAT IT IS LIKELY FORMER APPROACH WILL PREVAIL, WITH UNDP CONTINUING TO ENTERTAIN ALL BDG TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTS ON THEIR MERITS BUT OUTSIDE A FRAMEWORK OF MUTUALLY AGREED SECTORAL CONCENTRATIONS AND PRIORITIES. THIS DECREASES OVERALL PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS BY DIFFUSING LIMITED RESOURCES OVER WIDE RANGE OF SECTORS, NOT ALL OF WHICH CONTRIBUTE EQUALLY TO PROGRESS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OR ADDRESS CRITICAL PROBLEMS.

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RESREP'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE EXTREMELY CORDIAL, BUT UNDP AS WELL AS MANY OTHER ASSISTANCE AGENCIES/DONORS APPEAR OFTEN TO LEAN OVER BACKWARD IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE THE DESIRES OF A FLEDGLING GOVERNMENT FACING MONUMENTAL DIFFICULTIES. THIS APPROACH WAS JUSTIFIED IN FIRST FEW YEARS FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE, BUT HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF BECOMING INSTITUTIONALIZED MORE RECENTLY. DONOR COMMUNITY IS GENERALLY MOVING AT PRESENT TO RESTORE APPROPRIATE BALANCE.

UNDP IS MOVING SOMEWHAT MORE SLOWLY. THE INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND VIEWS AMONG DONORS, ARISING FROM FORMATION OF THE BANGLADESH AID GROUP IN PARIS LAST AUTUMN, CAN BE EXPECTED TO INFLUENCE PRESENT UNDP POSTURE VIS-A-VIS ITS PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH BDG. RESREP RELATIONSHIPS WITH UN AGENCIES IN THE FIELD APPEAR GENERALLY SATISFACTORY. MISSION UNAWARE OF ANY DIFFICULTIES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH UN AGENCIES AT HEADQUARTERS LEVEL. UNDP/IBRD UNDERTAKINGS ARE COORDINATED TO THE EXTENT OF INFORMATION EXCHANGES, BUT DO NOT APPEAR COMPLEMENTARY IN THE PROGRAMMATIC SENSE. UNICEF REMAINS ESSENTIALLY OUTSIDE COUNTRY PROGRAMMING PROCESS, DUE LARGELY TO ITS ANTECEDENT ROLE IN PREWAR EAST PAKISTAN AND UNBROKEN CHAIN OF OPERATIONS THROUGH POSTWAR PERIOD. (MOST UNDP ACTIVITIES WERE SUSPENDED IN 1971 AND A SEPARATE UNDP OFFICE WAS NOT REESTABLISHED UNTIL APRIL 1973.) SEPARATE UNICEF FINANCING ALSO KEY FACTOR IN LOCAL UNICEF AUTONOMY, AS IS CASE WITH WHO.

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2. COORDINATION OF ALL EXTERNAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.  
LIMITING FACTOR HAS BEEN LONG-STANDING HOST GOVERNMENT  
RELUCTANCE ACCEPT ANY EXTERNAL DONOR GROUPING WHICH COULD  
CONVEIVABLY BE IN A POSITION TO APPLY COLLECTIVE VIEWS/PRESSURES.  
BDG THUS PREFERS TO DEAL WITH EACH DONOR AGENCY/COUNTRY  
INDIVIDUALLY. AS COROLLARY, HOST GOVERNMENT HAS TENDED TO  
DISCOURAGE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EXTERNAL INFORMATION GATHERING  
OR EXCHANGE SYSTEM, AND PREFERRED TO KEEP DATA WITHIN OWN  
CONTROL. BDG PLANNING COMMISSION (PC) CHARGED WITH THIS  
FUNCTION. REPORTS PREPARED BY PC ARE STRICTLY CONTROLLED, BUT  
AVAILABLE ON AN INFORMAL BASIS TO DONORS WHO PERSIST IN  
OBTAINING THEM.

UNTIL THIS YEAR HOST GOVERNMENT POSTURE AND ATTITUDES RE  
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EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE COORDINATION STRICTLY OBSERVED BY UNDP  
AND MUCH OF GENERAL DONOR COMMUNITY. WITH RECENT FORMATION  
OF BANGLADESH AID GROUP (AT BDG REQUEST), AND CLEARER NEED  
FOR LEFT HAND TO BE AWARE OF RIGHT, MANY BILATERAL AND  
MULTILATERAL DONORS FAVOR MORE OPEN EXCHANGE OF INFORMA-  
TION AND VIEWS. MOST MEMBERS OF BANGLADESH AID GROUP ARE  
CURRENTLY CIRCULATING PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS AND/OR ATTENDING NON-  
FORMAL, LOOSELY STRUCTURED COORDINATION MEETINGS IN DACCA.  
RESREP ATTENDS THESE MEETINGS AND RECOGNIZES NEED FOR MORE  
OPEN INFORMATION EXCHANGE. UNDP NOW PREPARING CY 1974 REPORT  
ON EXTERNALLY FINANCED PRE-INVESTMENT AND TA PROJECTS. REPORT  
ALSO CALLS FOR BRIEF STATEMENT ON CAPITAL INVESTMENT FINANCED  
EXTERNALLY. REPORT COVERS NOTONLY UNDP AND OTHER MEMBER  
ORGANIZATIONS OF UN SYSTEM, BUT ALSO OTHER MULTILATERAL  
ORGANIZATIONS, BILATERAL PROGRAMS, FOUNDATIONS AND PRIVATE  
ORGANIZATIONS. THUS THE REPORT WILL BE OF WIDER INTEREST AND  
MAY PROVIDE FOR FIRST TIME COMPREHENSIVE DATA ON EXTERNAL  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. FYI: IBRD SIMILARLY ENGAGED IN VERY  
DETAILED REPORT ON EXTERNAL COMMODITY ASSISTANCE. END FYI.  
PREVIOUS INFORMATION LOGJAM IS NOW WELL ON WAY TO BREAKING  
UP. THIS IS BASIC PREREQUISITE TO UNDP ASSUMPTION OF A  
LEADING OR SUPPORTING ROLE FOR THE EFFECTIVE COORDINATION OF ALL  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. WHETHER ACTIVE COORDINATION ROLE  
ASSUMED BY BDG OR IN TANDEM WITH UNDP, OR EVEN SEPARATELY,  
IT IS OBVIOUS THIS WILL BE A LONG TERM PROCESS AND VERY MAJOR  
ADVANCE IN BDG'S ABILITY TO PLAN AND DIRECT ITS DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMS.

3. ROLE OF RESREP VIS-A-VIS OTHER UN SYSTEM ACTIVITIES.  
ONLY AREA WHERE RESREP COORDINATES ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE IS DISASTER RELIEF ROLE. DUE COMPLEXITY AND SUCCESS

OF PREVIOUS UN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS IN BANGLADESH (UNROD, UNROB), HOST GOVERNMENT WOULD PREFER THAT RESREP TAKE THE LEAD IN ORGANIZING RESPONSES TO FUTURE EMERGENCIES. WE UNDERSTAND RESREP COOL TO THIS IDEA AND WISHES COORDINATE ONLY DISCRETE UN AGENCY SEGMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO FUTURE DISASTERS. WE ENDORSE HIS POSITION ON MATTER: SUCCESSIVE NATURAL DISASTERS ARE PERMANENT FEATURE OF BENGAL AND BDG CLEARLY MUST DEVELOP ITS OWN PLANNING AND RESPONSE CAPABILITIES. UN DISASTER RELIEF OFFICER HAS RECENTLY ASSUMED DUTIES AT UNDP-DACCA. OFFICER WORKING ONLY PART TIME ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISASTER PLANNING; AT PRESENT WORKING NEARLY FULL TIME COMPILING DATA ON UNDP AND OTHER DONOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. ULTIMATE USEFULNESS HIS POSITION WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON POLICIES ADOPTED BY HOST GOVERNMENT.

#### 4. COUNTRY PROGRAM REVIEWS.

DEP RESREP STATES THAT AN INFORMAL COUNTRY PROGRAM REVIEW WAS HELD IN DECEMBER 1974 WITH PARTICIPATION BY THE BDG. WHILE HE WAS NOT VERY FORTHCOMING ON THE SUBJECT, DEP RESREP DID PROMISE TO SEND USAID A COPY OF THE REVIEW PROCEEDINGS. (HE WAS LESS SURE THAT THE DOCUMENT WAS TO BE CIRCULATED GENERALLY AMONG DONORS AS A MATTER OF UNDP POLICY.) DEP RESREP INDICATED THAT THE UNDP HAD BEEN ATTEMPTING TO ISSUE A REVIEW REPORT FOR THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS BUT THE PRESS OF BUSINESS HAD DELAYED COMPLETION.

#### 5. APPRAISAL OF PROPOSED PROJECTS.

AMBASSADOR, USAIR DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY HAVE FREQUENT BUSINESS/ SOCIAL CONTACT WITH UNDP LEADERSHIP. USAID HAS HAD OFFICER DETAILED AS UNDP LIAISON SINCE INCEPTION OF PROGRAM HERE. POST REGULARLY RECEIVING UNDP PROPOSED PROJECT SUMMARIES THROUGH AID/W CHANNELS AND OCCASIONALLY FROM UNDP LOCALLY. ALL SUMMARIES RECEIVED HAVE BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED AND/OR COMMENTED UPON BY USAID.

#### 6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION.

DUE MAGNITUDE OF UNDP/DACCA PROGRAM (DOLS 18.5 MILLION IPF FOR 72-76), OUR OVERWORKED DACCA FIELD STAFF, AND GENERAL HESITANCY OF UNDP OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS FRANKLY EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES, WE UNABLE COMMENT ON WEAKNESSES, STRENGTHS OF MOST PROJECTS OR STEPS TAKEN FOR IMPROVEMENT. WE EXPECT TO BE IN A BETTER POSITION IN THIS REGARD WHEN UNDP COMPLETES CURRENT STATUS REPORT ON ALL ITS PROJECTS.

PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS OF UNDP ARE SHORTAGES OF ADEQUATE HOUSING AND MANPOWER. THESE ARE PROBLEMS FACED BY MANY ASSISTANCE AGENCIES IN BANGLADESH. ANOTHER PERSISTENT UNDP COMPLAINT, ALSO SHARED BY OTHER EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS, IS SLOWNESS OF HOST

GOVERNMENT IN PROCESSING AUTHORIZATION OR APPROVAL DOCUMENTS.  
BDG DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION, MUCH OF IT CREATED AND STAFFED  
ON AD HOC BASIS FOLLOWING 1970/71 SUBCONTINENT UPRISINGS,  
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FACES UNUSUALLY SEVERE SHORTAGE OF SKILLED MANPOWER AT MIDDLE  
OPERATING LEVELS. ALSO OF IMPORTANCE IS INCREASING  
POLITICIZATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, A TREND THAT IS LIKELY  
TO GAIN MOMENTUM AS ONE PARTY STATE IS INSTITUTIONALIZED IN  
BANGLADESH. WE ARE TOLD BY UNDP THAT REQUESTS FOR THE  
CLEARANCE OF UNDP PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS EXCEEDING 3 MONTHS  
MUST BE APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT. FOLLOWING  
THIS CLEARANCE PROCEDURE (OFTEN SEVERAL MONTHS IN DURATION),  
IT USUALLY TAKES UNDP 4 TO 6 MONTHS TO RECRUIT AND FIELD A  
TECHNICIAN. SLOWNESS IN OBTAINING PROJECT PERSONNEL AND  
REACHING IMPLEMENTATION STAGE THEREFORE TENDS TO BE BEYOND  
CONTROL OF RESREP.

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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7. PROJECT EVALUATION.

WE ARE INFORMED BY UNDP THAT AS PART OF THE ANNUAL PROGRAM REVIEW EXERCISE IN DECEMBER, TRIPARTITE REVIEWS OF LARGE SCALE PROJECTS WERE UNDERTAKEN. POST HAS NO INFORMATION ON HOW THOROUGH OR EXTENSIVE THESE REVIEWS MAY HAVE BEEN. AGAIN, WE ARE FACED WITH GENERAL RELUCTANCE OF UNDP TO ADEQUATELY INFORM DONORS, INCLUDING THOSE WHICH CONTRIBUTE FUNDS DIRECTLY TO UNDP BUDGET. WE SEE TWO PRIMARY REASONS THIS RELUCTANCE: (A) HOST GOVERNMENT PRESSURES TO AVOID CRITICISM OF ANY KING; AND (B) AUTONOMOUS DECISION OF RESREP TO KEEP CARDS CLOSE TO VEST. POST HAS NOT BEEN PROVIDED COPY OF RESREP'S ANNUAL REPORT.

8. WOMEN IN BANGLADESH.

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UNDP TRACK RECORD THIS AREA SIMILAR TO THAT OF OTHER ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS HERE. IT EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT INCORPORATE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AS MATTER OF PRINCIPLE OR POLICY. BANGLADESH HAS RELATIVELY CLOSED MUSLIM SOCIETY AND BASIC PRECEPTS OF PURDAH WIDELY OBSERVED IN RURAL AREAS, WHERE 90 PERCENT OF POPULATION RESIDE. IN THOSE CASES OF WHICH WE HAVE DIRECT KNOWLEDGE, THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT OR HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS HAS BEEN UNRELATED TO THE CONCEPT OF EQUAL PARTNERSHIP WITH MEN. RATHER, THE PROJECTS THAT INCLUDE WOMEN INVARIABLY DO SO BECAUSE OF THE BIOLOGICAL ASPECTS: MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH, CONTRACEPTION, ETC. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE DO SEE MOVEMENT WITHIN BENGALIEE SOCIETY TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF POTENTIAL ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF FEMALE MEMBERS, WITH PRIVATE BENGALIEE AND EXPATRIATE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION FINANCING APPARENTLY INCREASING. AS PRACTICAL MATTER, WE BELIEVE IT UNREALISTIC FOR UNDP OR OTHER AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE MAJOR BREAKTHROUGHS IN INCREASING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS BANGLADESH, AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT, ALTHOUGH WE EXPECT THAT MANY DONORS WILL BEGIN OR CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH BDG THIS REGARD.

9. FOLLOW-UP WITH UNDP AND EXECUTING AGENCIES.

A. ALTHOUGH THE PREPARATION AND CIRCULATION OF A COMPLETE UNDP REPORT ON TA ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING THOSE OF OTHER DONORS) WILL REPRESENT AN IMPROVEMENT IN INFORMATION SHARING, THE

GENERAL PROBLEM NOTED IN LAST YEAR'S CERP 0008 REPORT REMAINS THIS YEAR. WE RECOGNIZE THAT INFORMATION SHARING IS A DELICATE PROBLEM, WITH THE UNDP ATTEMPTING TO BUILD/MAINTAIN CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AS BILATERAL DONORS PEER OVER SHOULDERS. THERE ARE NO READY SOLUTIONS TO THE TRIPARTITE HOST GOVERNMENT/UNDP/OTHER DONOR RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM; YET, IT EQUALLY APPARENT RESREP HAS SUFFICIENT LEEWAY HERE TO KEEP UNDP CONTRIBUTORS AT CONSIDERABLE ARM'S LENGTH IF HE SO DESIRES. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND UNDP/HEADQUARTERS ASCERTAIN HOW FULLY UNDP/DACCA IS COMPLYING WITH INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS AS HEADQUARTERS SEES THEM, AND SUGGEST THAT SUCH REVIEW BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE CONTEXT OF ACTUAL REPORTS/DOCUMENTS BEING PROVIDED BY RESREPS WORLDWIDE.

B. INFORMATION PROBLEMS ASIDE, UNDP/DACCA RESREP HAS SHOWN CONSIDERABLE INITIATIVE OVER PAST YEAR IN TACKLING OUTSTANDING URGENT DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS WITH RESOURCES AT HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISPOSAL. SPECIFICALLY, AFTER CONSULTING WITH BDG, US AMBASSADOR, JAPANESE AND SEVERAL OTHER DONORS, RESREP SUCCESSFULLY TACKLED CRITICAL PROBLEM OF REPLACING DESTROYED CONTROL ROOM PANELS AT GHORASAL FERTILIZER PLANT. FACT THAT THIS PLANT IS TO REOPEN IN NEXT 6 WEEKS IS LARGELY DUE TO RESREP'S INITIATIVE AND ABILITY FIND UN FUNDS (A-60, OCTOBER 9, 1974). SIMILARLY, RESREP HAS ENCOURAGED DONOR EXAMINATION F, AND BDG DECISIONS ON, CHITTAGOG PORT PROBLEMS, INCLUDING MINIBULKERS AND MOST RECENTLY, VACUATORS. WE COMMEND THESE INITIATIVES AND RECOMMEND THEY BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF UNDP HEADQUARTERS.

DECONTROL APRIL 17, 1976.  
BOSTER

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